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SUBJECT: UGANDA: PRESIDENT SIGNS ANTI-TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS LAW

REF: KAMPALA 00027

¶1. Summary: On October 1, Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni signed the long-awaited "The Prevention of Trafficking in Persons Act" which contains provisions to protect victims, prosecute traffickers and prevent trafficking in Uganda. By criminalizing human trafficking, the Act places Uganda in compliance with the "United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children," which the Government of Uganda has signed but not yet ratified. End summary.

¶2. Uganda has long had special challenges in dealing with trafficking and other crimes involving women and children. Over 10,000 children in northern Uganda remain unaccounted for and were likely victims of human trafficking that occurred during the 1986-2006 Lord's Resistance Army insurgency. More recently, a 2008 Ministry of Gender, Labor and Social Affairs report estimated that a total of 72,000 women and children in Uganda were sold into commercial sexual exploitation in 2008.

¶3. The Act specifies a maximum of 15 years of imprisonment for trafficking in persons; imprisonment for life for aggravated trafficking in persons; the death penalty for trafficking children; and 10 years imprisonment for using the labor services of a trafficked person. Persons who fail to disclose to the authorities the committing of a trafficking offense are liable to three years imprisonment or a fine USD 30,000. The Act also stipulates that citizens have a duty to report trafficking or face six months imprisonment or a USD 50,000 fine. (Note: Although the Act carries a penalty of capital punishment for the trafficking of children, Uganda has not applied capital punishment since the 1990s and a number of convicted felons remain permanently on death row. End note).

¶4. Comment: Signing the anti-trafficking bill is the latest achievement in Uganda's efforts to prevent and prosecute trafficking in persons. In 2008, State Department G/TIP funding provided counter-trafficking training to 2,010 law enforcement officers. Also in 2008, Ugandan police created a new counter-trafficking unit (reftel).

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